



TOOLS FOR QUALITY AND TRACEABILITY

Tools for the quality and traceability of mountain products

Quality is one of the most important factors for mountain products. The improvement and enhancement of it through a **clear traceability and control can help to create a competitive high quality product from mountain farming**. Nowadays modern tools are available to guarantee quality throughout the supply chain and they could be optimised and taken up. The cost benefit relation of using these kinds of tools should also be explored in a case by case basis to see in which combination of tools we get the maximum quality and profitability.



Assessment of the current situation:

Tools for the control of the traceability and quality of agricultural products at European level are numerous Starting from labels as Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), which are well-known and are well widespread (especially in Southern European countries), specific regional and local labels... And now we have the new opportunities given by the optional quality term “mountain product”, which need to be explored and developed.

There are also many traceability tools at regional level that could be good examples for other regions and areas and that could be transferred to others.

In general, there are many tools available and mechanisms for the control, traceability and quality of mountain products. **But, it is not always easy** to know them, to have access to them and **to find the best strategy and mix of tools** for each case.

The main difficulties encountered so far are the following:

- **The producer is often not paid at the height of its certification** or is not very aware of his level of commitment.
- **There is a big gap between the payment received by the producer and the final market price.**
- **Labels, certifications or marks are expensive** and administrative procedures can be complex and time consuming. The results of having too many standards and tools existing for traceability are:
 - Interference with the proper operation of these tools by farmers
 - Misleading the consumer.
- **The consumer does not often see the link between a product and its territory.**
- **Many producers find difficult to apply the quality and traceability tools.** At the same time the knowledge of the existing tools is not always enough and they are not aware of the existing opportunities.





Recommendations to improve the traceability and quality of mountain products:

- **Need for an integrated implementation of traceability along the supply chain** at regional and local levels to avoid discrepancies between the original product and the final one. For this purpose, it is necessary to respect the conditions in terms of:
 - Production volumes;
 - Food security and quality;
 - Establishment of a cooperative system to ensure a balance along the whole supply chain, especially for producers often harmed in this process.
- **Need of public support at European, national and regional levels for the effective implementation of the traceability of mountain products and the optional quality term “mountain product”.**
- **Need for a coordination and standardisation of rules at European and national levels to reduce the administrative burdens and costs** of commitment and give more clarity and visibility about the existence and applications of the available tools for the traceability and quality of mountain products.
- **The need for awareness raising and communication improvement campaigns with consumers** to highlight the quality and origin of mountain products.
- **Need for a direct benefit for the producers** and reducing the gap of price between the start and the end of the supply chain.
- **Need for a better link between the territory and the product** in front of the consumer. This could be done through an effective traceability that can be shown in the product through a mention, label or other visual identification. Together with campaigns to raise the awareness and knowledge of the consumer about the origin of the product so they can easily identify the mountain product with their mountain origin.
- **Need of adapted strategies and best-fitting models** for each territory and each producer in terms of use of the best fitting tools and labels for the traceability and quality. It is important to avoid getting lost between too many certifications.

Action plan for Euromontana

Action 1: Euromontana will work and push the Member States and regions for an adequate uptake of the opportunities given by the new optional quality term “mountain product”. At the same time, Euromontana will encourage managing authorities to establish adequate instruments to control the traceability and the authenticity of the mountain origin of mountain products.

Timetable: 2015, Euromontana secretariat with the support of its members.



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